

# **Development Communities of Practice at USAID Perspective and Issues**

## **BTEC KM/KS Pilot Communities Project**

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## I. BACKGROUND

### Communities of Practice – Definition and Rationale

“Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their understanding and knowledge of this area by interacting on an ongoing basis.” Wenger, McDermott and Snyder, 2002, *Cultivating Communities of Practice: a Guide to Managing Knowledge*

“Communities of practice are groups of people who come together to share and learn from one another, face-to-face and virtually. They are held together by a common interest in a body of knowledge and are driven by a desire and need to share problems, experiences, insights, templates, tools and best practices. Community members deepen their knowledge by interacting on an on-going basis and, over time, develop a set of shared practices.” APQC Best Practices Report, 2001, *Building and Sustaining Communities of Practice: Continuing Success in Knowledge Management*

Since the early 1990's, there has been increased recognition of and support for the informal networks of colleagues that operate within the bounds of our corporate and government structures. It is within these voluntary groups that novices are mentored, expertise is nurtured, experts are identified, knowledge is shared, and answers are rapidly provided to an ever-widening array of inquiries. The “know how”, “know who” and “know what” that we use to successfully operate, compete and provide solutions to our clients and our managers is needed more urgently than ever. Such knowledge is increasingly available to us not only by better use of our vast arrays of databases and information systems, but by access to the informal communities to which we belong.

Along with the recognition of the value of such groups, has come the provision of tools and support structures to facilitate the launching and sustaining of these communities. Outside of the formal bureaucracies, but aligned with their strategies, communities are increasingly recognized as successful mechanisms for the management and sharing of organizational knowledge.

Communities are not teams, but their members are often participants in one or more teams engaged in discrete project activities. Communities are not web sites or collaborative software solutions, but their members often provide useful content for our web sites and use a variety of software solutions to facilitate their interactions. Communities do not supplant the task-oriented functions of our bureaucracies and organizational hierarchies, but their members do help each other better understand how best to perform those functions. Communities can also distill our own best practices, manage knowledge (stewardship) for use by those within and outside our communities and create new and innovative ways to do the work of our organizations.

“In the modern, knowledge-based, global organization, communities create a channel of knowledge to cross boundaries created by workflow, functions, geography and time.” When working successfully, communities of practice “provide the means to move local

know-how to collective information and promote standardization of practices across operations and regions.” APQC Best Practices Report, 2001, *Building and Sustaining Communities of Practice: Continuing Success in Knowledge Management*.

See Appendix G. for additional community of practice references.

### **USAID Communities of Practice – Current Operations**

Communities of practice are not new to USAID. The BTEC KM/KS Sub-committee has identified more than thirty communities currently operating within the Agency (Appendix A). Members in these communities come from throughout the Agency – Washington and missions, regional and pillar bureaus, employees and partners. All types of communities are operating within the Agency (helping, best practice, knowledge stewarding and innovation), some forming recently (GIS) and others operating for years (RFNet). The method and tools they use for community interactions range from regular face-to-face meetings to a wide variety of e-mail and web-based solutions.

While providing direct benefits for their membership, most of the current communities in the Agency still operate within their own bureaucratic or functional silos. The lack of common, Agency-wide community processes and tools inhibits the harvesting and sharing of knowledge from the individual communities for use by others throughout the organization. Provision of such Agency-wide solutions is a key objective articulated in the fall, 2002 by the USAID Knowledge for Development strategy (Appendix B).

### **USAID Knowledge Management – Vision and Approach**

USAID’s strength derives from our rich field experience and extensive knowledge of development issues. Managing our knowledge as a critical asset allows us to improve strategy, operations and results. This management will require knowledge to be enabled by people, processes and technology and embedded in core Agency functions.

Focus groups sponsored by PPC and LPA during the Summer, 2002 identified needs and issues to be resolved by better access to timely and relevant information and knowledge. In summary:

- Insufficient knowledge of who knows what, of who does what
- Knowledge is in people’s heads - when they walk, it walks. Need to harvest tacit knowledge, share with new employees.
- No linkages between knowledge sharing communities
- Too much re-inventing the wheel
- Too much data, too little information
- Inadequate data planning and coordination

In response to these issues, the following vision for knowledge management in the Agency was defined:

Leverage and share our knowledge by embracing a process to manage USAID knowledge not only with a set of tool and techniques, but with behaviors that will enable the Agency to provide development leadership for formulation and implementation of our national foreign policy agenda.

#### ONE-STOP RESOURCE

- For knowledge sharing and learning
- Data, information, resources, experience-based solution

#### ENABLED BY WEB-BASED TOOLS

- Portal, search, collaboration, expertise

#### CREATING ACCESSIBLE COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

- PPC Coordination, support and assistance
- Facilitated by knowledge intermediaries

#### SUPPORTING USAID DEVELOPMENT LEADERSHIP OBJECTIVES

- Interagency cooperation, Donor Coordination
- Public outreach and partnering

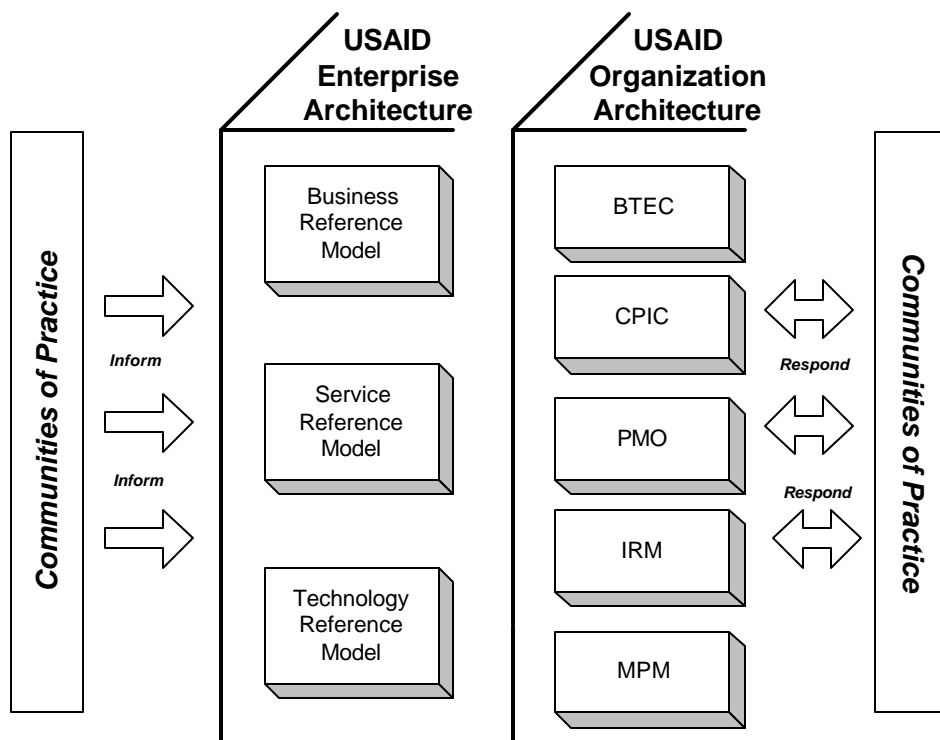
The Knowledge for Development strategy defined an approach to leverage successful knowledge management initiatives to achieve the vision. This approach defined several critical gaps to be filled including two in the Community of Practice domain:

- Community of Practice expansion  
Existing Communities of Practice need to be accessible to non-members and augmented with knowledge sharing tools. Areas requiring enhanced knowledge sharing need assistance developing Communities of Practice.
- Knowledge Portal Solution  
A Knowledge Sharing web site that offers access to Agency Communities of Practice, collaboration and decision support tools, and archived agency experience.

#### **USAID Community of Practice – Preliminary Strategy**

While a complete strategy for Communities of Practice at the Agency will be developed as part of the CoP Pilot Project (discussed in the next section), a preliminary strategy for USAID communities can be defined in two dimensions:

1. Direct provision of Development knowledge to USAID employees and partners
2. Support for the Agency's on-going Enterprise Architecture (EA) endeavor.



This approach would find strategic value for Communities of Practice in their ability to inform the Agency's EA models and to act as a sounding board for plans and decisions forthcoming from the Agency's Organizational Architecture. Input to the Enterprise Architecture could be gathered from community members (via special projects or in response to ad hoc requests) for:

- current and planned processes for the Business Reference Model,
- current and planned capabilities of the Service Reference Model, and
- current and planned solutions of the Technology Reference Model.

The Agency's Organizational Architecture (OA) represents the core administrative and M Bureau decision-making and project management structures of the Agency. As the various groups within this OA seek end-user feedback on their plans and decisions, the Agency's Communities of Practice can provide an excellent venue in which those plans and decisions can be vetted.

In addition to supporting the Enterprise and Organization Architectures, Communities of Practice at USAID will directly support the Agency's employees and partners by creating improved means to access, create and share the Development knowledge they need for their strategy formation, program development and project activities. Development practitioners in the Agency will support each other directly through the Communities of Practice – creating and sharing best practices, identifying expertise and meeting the ever-increasing demands for knowledge that Development requires.

## **Communities of Practice Initiative – Pilot Project Scope of Work**

The cornerstone of the KM approach adopted by the Agency is to leverage and coordinate existing Communities of Practice (CoP) within the Agency and to establish new Communities of Practice. PPC and its contractors will facilitate the creation of Communities of Practice and establish the processes, organizational guidelines, and web-based systems for supporting CoPs.

Three pilot Communities of Practice (CoP's) will be launched in the first quarter of 2002. The BTEC Knowledge Management / Knowledge Sharing (KM/KS) Subcommittee will provide technical and organizational assistance to support the pilot communities.

This project will develop the pilot Communities of Practice in a way that:

- Defines the role and value of communities for the Agency;
- Develops the requirements for a community portal solution - the web-based collaborative software best suited for USAID CoP's;
- Provides the technical and organizational support to implement the solution (people, process and technology) in managed pilots from whom the Agency can learn what works best.

This will result in the most appropriate processes, organizational guidelines and web-based systems for support of communities of practice at USAID. An Agency-wide system will be defined for the support of viable and accessible communities of practice. USAID Communities of Practice in the pilot project will:

- Develop relationships between employees who do the same thing, share the same passions and interests;
- Improve opportunities to develop and share knowledge and apply it for program and internal Agency needs;
- Provide new ideas and innovation that create advantages for the Agency;
- Create social structures that can take responsibility for fostering learning, developing competencies, and managing knowledge.

The pilot project will facilitate the creation of Communities of Practice and establish the processes, organizational guidelines, and web-based systems for CoPs at USAID.

Three USAID communities will be supported with:

- Provision of Web-based systems for collaboration, content management, expertise and other functions required by the pilot communities;
- Clarification of individual and organizational roles and responsibilities for formation and support of successful communities;

- Facilitation of the start-up and/or on-going development of the communities (including training, change management assistance and organizational development assistance);
- Definition of the behavioral norms, incentives, metrics, standards and governance mechanisms for optimal performance of the communities;
- Advisory services personnel and processes to support knowledge requests and knowledge harvesting for the communities.

To meet the needs of CoPs, USAID anticipates the creation of an Internet portal and the integration of this portal with existing or new tools for CoPs. The high-level functional requirements for this portal include:

- A portal interface customizable by the CoP and/or for each individual user
- A directory of experts and CoP members within the sphere of the CoP
- Threaded discussions with email notifications for portal users
- A repository for document postings
- Interfaces to other resources such as CDIE Online and the success stories database
- The portal is to be well-organized and user friendly

Agency and contractor personnel will perform the Pilot CoP Project tasks. PPC will define and obtain the resources necessary for the project. PPC will also be responsible for the providing the project leadership and coordination among the other USAID Bureaus. The creation and execution of the organizational development and change management plans will be led by PPC.

The BTEC KM/KS sub-committee will identify the CoP's for the pilot and will provide acceptance of all project deliverables.

The Agency's existing IMR and DIS contracts will provide the contractor personnel to assist with the pilot project. The IMR contractors will assume primary responsibility for the following deliverables:

- Strategy and Requirements Analysis Phase Deliverables
  - Stakeholder Analysis
    - Stakeholder identification: USAID and Non-USAID CoP members
    - Focus groups, surveys
    - Detailed user profiles, User/function matrix, Use case scenarios
  - Analysis of KM Inventory
    - Function, usability, technology, lessons-learned, best practices, ranking
  - CDIE On-line analysis and requirements
  - KM Performance Framework
    - Mission, Business Objectives, Critical Success Factors
  - Requirements Matrix
  - High-level Technical Requirements
  - Alternatives Analysis: Gap Analysis for up to two alternatives
  - Transition, training and on-going support requirements

- Design Deliverables
  - Technical Design
    - Site architecture
    - Cognitive design
    - Graphic design
- Build and Implement Deliverables
  - Technical
  - Real-time test portal
  - Final portal
  - Transition, training and on-going support

The DIS contractors will assume responsibility for the following deliverables:

- Strategy and Requirements Analysis Phase Deliverables
  - Advisory Services Analysis
  - Detailed user profiles, User/function matrix, Use case scenarios
  - Advisory Services Requirements Matrix
  - High-level Technical Requirements for support of Advisory Services
  - Alternatives Analysis for support of Advisory Services: Gap Analysis (up to two alternatives)
- Design Deliverables
  - Governance Design for Communities and Advisory Services
    - Process
    - Standards
    - Incentives
    - Control/Autonomy
- Build and Implement Deliverables
  - Governance Documentation and Procedures for Communities and Advisory Services
  - Process
  - Standards
  - Incentives
  - Control/Autonomy

**Integrated Timeline :** The contractors and USAID personnel will work together to integrate the deliverables of each phase, leveraging each other's work for the delivery of common project deliverables.



Activity	Task Description	Deliverable	Responsibility	Est. Due Date
1.0 Strategy and Requirements Analysis Phase	1.1 Develop CoP Performance Framework <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mission Statement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Value Proposition</li> <li>Individual</li> <li>Community</li> <li>USAID</li> </ul> </li> <li>Objectives -- &gt; Critical Success Factors</li> </ul>	CoP Performance Framework	IBM: BTEC/KM: HIV/AIDS CoP: Ed CoP: Mgt Metrics CoP:	April 1 – April 7
	1.2 Conduct Membership Analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Members and member-groups</li> <li>High-level social network analysis</li> </ul>	Membership Analysis	IBM: BTEC/KM: HIV/AIDS CoP: Ed CoP: Mgt Metrics CoP:	April 1- April 11
	1.3 Define Roles and Governance <p><u>Roles</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Executive Sponsor</li> <li>Leader/ facilitator</li> <li>Content Manager</li> <li>Events Coordinator</li> <li>Communications</li> <li>Education and Skill Development</li> </ul> <p><u>Core Information</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Domain definition</li> <li>Knowledge boundaries and taxonomy/categorization rules</li> </ul> <p><u>Operating Rules</u></p>	Description of Roles and Governance  Taxonomy guidelines	IBM: BTEC/KM: HIV/AIDS CoP: Ed CoP: Mgt Metrics CoP:	April 1 – April 18
	1.4 Develop Events Plan	Events Plan	IBM: BTEC/KM: HIV/AIDS CoP: Ed CoP: Mgt Metrics CoP:	April 14 – June 6
	1.5 Develop Marketing and Communications Plan	Marketing and Communications Plan	IBM: BTEC/KM: HIV/AIDS CoP: Ed CoP: Mgt Metrics CoP:	April 14 – June 6

Activity	Task Description	Deliverable	Responsibility	Est. Due Date
	1.6 Develop Education Skill Development Plan	Education Skill Development Plan	IBM: BTEC/KM: HIV/AIDS CoP: Ed CoP: Mgt Metrics CoP:	April 14 – June 6
	1.7 Develop Advisory Services Integration Plan	Advisory Services Integration Plan	IBM: BTEC/KM: HIV/AIDS CoP: Ed CoP: Mgt Metrics CoP:	April 14 – June 6
	1.8 Develop Tools and Functional Requirements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potential tools</li> <li>Tools mapped to Critical Success Factors</li> <li>Use Cases by User type <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tool selection</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Tools and Functional Requirements	IBM: BTEC/KM: HIV/AIDS CoP: Ed CoP: Mgt Metrics CoP:	April 1 – May 2
	1.9 Package Selection Analysis	Package Selection Analysis	IBM: BTEC/KM: HIV/AIDS CoP: Ed CoP: Mgt Metrics CoP:	April 1 – May 2
2.0 design Deliverables	2.1 Technical Design <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Site architecture</li> <li>Cognitive design</li> <li>Graphic design</li> </ul>	Technical Design	IBM: BTEC/KM: HIV/AIDS CoP: Ed CoP: Mgt Metrics CoP:	May 2 – June 20
3.0 Build and Implement Deliverables	3.1 Build and Implement Deliverables <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Technical</li> <li>Real-time test portal</li> <li>Final portal</li> <li>Transition, training and on-going support</li> </ul>	CoP Portal	IBM: BTEC/KM: HIV/AIDS CoP: Ed CoP: Mgt Metrics CoP:	June 2 onwards

## II. STAKEHOLDERS AND PARTICIPANTS

### Agency Stakeholders – Missions and Washington

The stakeholders and participants in the Agency's communities of practice will vary based on the focus and charter of each community. Participants in the communities will span the full range of Agency positions (appointees, Foreign Service, Civil Service and contractors) and organizations (Washington and field offices, regional and pillar bureaus, management, operations and program activities). Depending on the specific intent of the communities, it is possible that membership could extend to individuals outside the

Agency, possibly to other USG employees or NGO employees who ‘practice’ in the field of interest defined by the community. By design, community members are cross-functional and cross-organizational; their membership being self-selected based on shared interests, passions and objectives in a defined field.

There are some key functions within the Agency that have a stake in the success of all communities. PPC, as the Agency’s knowledge management focal point, will be directly engaged in facilitating, monitoring and sustaining all communities. In its efforts to help ‘knowledge and information emerge and flow to the right people at the right time’, PPC will lead the effort to establish and maintain the people, processes and systems needed to support communities in the Agency. While this effort is being lead by PPC management, the BTEC’s Knowledge Management/Knowledge Sharing sub-committee is guiding its priorities and activities (Appendix C. BTEC KM/KS Sub-committee Charter).

In addition to PPC, the Agency’s LPA, IRM and HR functions have an important stake in the communities. Most communities of practice come to rely on some collaborative software tools, databases and web sites to facilitate their knowledge sharing and knowledge stewarding functions. IRM has an interest in helping the communities identify, select and deploy solutions that are fully aligned with the strategic information architecture that is being supported by the Agency.

Along with their primary functions of providing forums for the pursuit of their own members’ interests, communities are often involved in the professional development, skills enhancement and expertise identification of their participants. It is in this way that the HR function has a stake in the operations of communities of practice.

LPA, with its own information sharing responsibilities, needs to understand the roles communities can play in assisting with these responsibilities. Communities can be an additional source of information for LPA (e.g. success stories) and an additional channel through which LPA can disseminate information about the Agency, its policies and programs.

### **Contractors – Commonality of Purpose**

USAID’s partnering contractors are increasingly acknowledged as key providers of the information and knowledge required for the success of the Agency’s program activities. In the field, it is the Agency’s contractors (including PVOs/NGOs) that require access to types of information and expertise that will be readily available through successfully operating communities. Working with community provided knowledge and participating directly as community members, USAID contractors will find better ways to access and to share the knowledge for which they have been hired to create.

Several existing contractor relationships are directly impacted by the Agency’s community of practice interests, not only as community members, but also as providers

of the tools and services needed to facilitate communities. The roles of the DIS contract and the IMR contract were defined in the preceding section of this document,

**Communities of Practice Initiative – Pilot Project Scope of Work.** In addition to these, the current DEC contract maintains a set of knowledge assets for the Agency that is significant for communities – both as a valuable source of information for them and as a potential repository of community-developed knowledge. As the Agency community processes and tools are defined, the knowledge and experience of the DEC contractor staff will be invaluable for their understanding of current methods of harvesting, organizing and disseminating Agency information. With the primary responsibility for maintaining the organization’s institutional memory and with its current focus on making CDIE On-line more readily accessible using CoP-based principles, DEC personnel will need to fully participate in the definition of community processes and tools for knowledge sharing. The definition of the ‘people, processes and systems’ that will support communities of practice at the Agency needs to co-involve the DIS, IMR and DEC contracts along with all of the USAID stakeholders defined above. The regular and frequent communication and collaboration of all parties will be necessary to provide the support mechanisms for communities of practice that are fully integrated, non-redundant and effective.

### **III. ISSUES**

Communities of practice are in many ways the most naturally occurring structures within organizations. The informal networks upon which practitioners of all types rely for support and information are frequently the kernels upon which we build communities of practice. As organizations seek to support these groups, however, a number of challenges arise due to the very nature of communities. This section introduces some of the issues associated with facilitating communities of practice. Recommendations for dealing with these issues are presented in the next section on implementation strategies.

#### **Organizational Development – Supporting Communities**

The move from totally informal networks to ‘formal’ communities of practice creates an organizational development challenge for most organizations. Traditionally, organizational models are based on a command and control premise. Communities, self-directed, voluntary, and evolving groups of practitioners require some ‘abdication’ of control and raise a variety of practical issues. How will they be funded? How will community members account for their time? How will they be managed? How will those outside the community benefit from what is happening inside the community? What happens when community activities overlap with traditional organizational functions? New organizational models are needed to support communities of practice, or our existing models need to be extended to provide this support. It will be necessary to investigate the alternatives, agree upon the solutions, and develop our organizations to provide the necessary community support functions. The roles and responsibilities, the processes and tools and the mechanisms to align communities with the strategies of the Agency will need to be carefully planned and deployed.

Appendix D, Organizational Support Models for Communities of Practice, presents several different organizational support examples.

### **Technology – Preventing “Noble Failures”**

The effort to identify and provide supporting information systems and tools for communities requires the same care that is needed when providing any complex system solution. Collaborative software, web-based systems, databases and other tools supporting knowledge sharing and stewarding for communities must meet requirements as articulated by those communities. End-user needs and preferences must be fully understood to define those requirements. Understanding how the tools will be used, specifying the processes that will be employed, providing training and support for those tools must all be done to ensure that the community will embrace the solutions offered. Too many information technology projects become ‘noble failures’, not for lack of good intent, but for lack of the careful understanding and meeting of customer requirements. Intensive involvement of users in the development of their solution is critical. Careful and rigorous methods that maintain focus on the requirements are as necessary for success in supporting communities as they are for providing technical support to any business function.

### **Change Management – Overcoming Resistance to Change**

Introducing supporting mechanisms for communities of practice, by definition, introduces changes to the way people and organizations work. Reactions to change are varied, depending on many factors. Resistance to change, passive or overt, needs to be understood and overcome. The political and bureaucratic barriers to change need to be identified and removed. Incentives to accept change, communication of the reasons for and benefits of change, and leadership by champions of change are all needed to overcome the normal resistance to change that individuals and organizations can experience.

Success with the Agency’s communities of practice efforts will be made more likely with the careful development and deployment of change management plans for those communities.

### **Critical Success Factors – Sponsorship, Leadership and Holism**

Richard McDermott, a leading knowledge management consultant, has noted the necessity of overcoming four challenges for success in building communities of practice. He cites the management challenge, the community challenge, the technical challenge and the personal challenge (“Critical success factors in building communities of practice”, Knowledge Management Review, vol. 3, issue 2, 2000). This view assumes a holistic approach, focusing on the people, the processes and the technologies that are needed for success. It is the people (management sponsors, community leaders and community members) and the processes that are performed by communities that need to

overcome the management, community and personal challenges addressed by McDermott.

The management challenge is to understand how communities can be used to address concerns of importance to management and provide the support and sponsorship necessary for success. Management must demonstrate its commitment and buy-in across all levels (cascading sponsorship from executive levels through operational levels) of the organization. The community leaders must maintain excellent communication with management to ensure that the communities are addressing not only their members' expressed needs but also "topics at the heart of the business where leveraging knowledge will have a significant impact".

Community leaders must "care about the community... have a heartfelt interest in the topic, (and) have technical knowledge about the field." "But their primary job is to connect people, so they need to be engineers with social skills".

The community challenge and the personal challenge are to create "forums for thinking". "The most valuable community events focus on thinking together to solve problems." The on-going community challenge is to involve its membership in such thinking. The personal challenge is to think aloud, sharing "half-baked" ideas even though such activities might not come naturally to many community members.

#### **IV. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY**

The following recommendations are posited for the implementation team to consider. All of these implementation strategies require time and resources, but all will contribute to the overall success of the community of practice pilot project.

##### **Learning and Knowledge Management – Applying Best Practices**

The Agency has considerable experience with a variety of communities of practice. Much information has also been documented from other USG agencies, NGO's, PVO's and commercial organizations. To make the most of its pilot CoP project, USAID should take the time to learn from the experience others, identifying and applying the lessons learned to the pilot project (Peer Assists). Such learning 'before' should be augmented by periodic learning 'during' the course of the pilot project (After Action Learning). The completion of the project should immediately be followed by a learning 'after' session to document the lessons learned (Retrospective). All of these learnings should be made available to the project team and its communities and to all of the Agency's communities. By forming a community for the Agency's community of practice leaders (a CoP for USAID Communities), these learning can be readily distributed and applied. Efforts to prepare, launch and sustain this 'meta' CoP should begin as soon as possible. The development of the learn before, during and after processes for the pilot could be one of this CoP's first efforts.

## **Project Management – Planning, Coordination and Communication**

The Agency management should recognize the importance of formal project management for success of the pilot project. Like a traditional system implementation effort, there is the need for formal methods and tools to be used for project planning, coordination and communication. Building on the PMO required 90-day list of major activities and deliverables, detailed task plans, resource assignments and schedules should be developed as the primary tools for coordination and communication. Regular status meetings, progress reports and scheduled project reviews should be provided to ensure the quality of the products produced by this effort.

Given the importance and complexity of the CoP pilot project, a full-time project manager should be assigned to complete the required management tasks (Project Management Institute guidelines estimate project management to be 10-15% of total project effort).

## **Change Management – Assessment and Intervention**

The amount of change and the impact of the change associated with the adoption of communities of practice by an organization must not be underestimated. Instead, that change should be analyzed and anticipated (Change Readiness, Stakeholder Analysis, Impact Analysis) and appropriate interventions should be identified and implemented (Communication Plan, Training Plan, Incentives and Rewards Program). By developing and executing a formal change management plan as part of the CoP pilot project, the Agency can further ensure that it will obtain the return on its investment in communities of practice that will be necessary for extension of this work beyond the pilots.

## **Organizational Development – Planning, Budgeting and Sustaining**

Closely associated with the change management effort, the Agency must address the organizational development issues associated with successful communities of practice. The planning (which CoP's, what should they accomplish), budgeting (who pays for the sponsorship, leadership and membership time and activities) and sustaining (how is community knowledge harvested, refreshed, distributed) of communities takes place in some organizational context which must be clearly defined. This includes the definition of the roles and responsibilities, processes and practices of the communities. Building an effective context for successful communities is a complex organizational development effort.

In addition to the effort to directly define and support the communities, two additional organizational structures should be considered – an Advisory Services Group and a Knowledge Management Organization. Nascent versions of these support structures exist today.

Various functions provided by the Development Information Services contract support current community activities. These functions could be enhanced to more fully support

Agency communities (provided by an Advisory Services Group). See Appendix E. for a draft of potential Advisory Services functions.

The BTEC Knowledge Management/Knowledge Sharing Sub-committee currently acts as the Agency's Knowledge Management Organization (KMO). Only one member of that committee, the contracted USAID Knowledge Sharing Facilitator, is available on a full-time basis. While a virtual KMO has sufficed to-date, consideration must be given to the increased effort that will be needed to provide adequate support for future CoP development and for fulfillment of the rest of the Agency's knowledge management strategies and initiatives. A knowledge management metrics program should be developed by the KMO to develop objective, quantifiable measures of the value of the Agency's knowledge management efforts. Additionally, ownership of the various knowledge management processes, their maintenance, documentation and dissemination must be address by the KMO.

### **Post-implementation Support – Path Forward**

Immediately following the completion of the pilot project, an assessment of communities within the Agency would be valuable. Understanding the effectiveness of current communities will help to determine the overall type of support they need to maximize their potential contribution to the Agency. Additional communities of practice should be considered to assist the Agency with its strategic objectives. Plans for launching new communities of practice in the Agency should be aligned with the current knowledge management strategy and with the needs and interests of Agency personnel.